Members Attending: Don Perry, Steve Weiss, Mary Roche, Cynthia Flores, Steve Weiss, Jeff Beckelman, Raul Ruiz, Cristina Gregorio, Carolyn Stark, Lisa Vossler Smith, Maria Machuca, Karolee Sowle, Bill Kroonen, Kate Spates, Tom Davis, Fred Bell, Terry Green, Bill Powers

Guest: Nancy Samuelson, Ernie Rios, Rene Schiavone, Missy Gardner, Paula Tapia

Minutes for LYCEUM meeting on December 6, 2009

1. Quality of Life:

Carolyn Stark welcomed new members to the Desert Lyceum. The group continued their discussion on “Quality of Place” and what areas need to improve in order to attract and retain young professionals.

Paula Tapia stated that she would like the following areas/things to improve: more post graduate degrees at UCR and Cal State Palm Desert campuses, affordable and safe housing for young professionals, diverse cultural events and concerts, outdoor activities spread throughout the valley, and convenient public transportation. Kate Spates asked why public transportation is not convenient. Fred Bell stated that public transportation is too slow as it takes too long to get from one place to another. Raul said that during the summer public transportation can also be a health hazard for the very young and old. Kate stated that the casinos offer a variety of concerts. Paula said that the artists are not appealing to her age group. Jeff Beckelman said that the casinos are using their entertainment to fill their casinos and are targeting an older crowd. Terry Green suggested pulling together a subcommittee with a younger audience in order to get a better understanding of their entertainment needs. Members talked about how UCR Palm Desert, Cal State and Indian Wells could be used as entertainment venues and the cost that would be associated with these projects.

Ernie Rios said this effort should provide accessibility to local bands. He said that Coachella Fest started with local bands and now is going with bigger acts and is diluting the original purpose. Ernie said a lot of quality of life issues discussed today have also been addressed in various boards that he serves in the east valley. Some of their concerns include security, health programs and health awareness. Many of the children are faced with health issues and do not have access to teen centers or youth groups. Maria said that there isn’t any family entertainment in the East Valley and agreed that the east valley does not have the health services needed to serve the community.
Missy said that there doesn’t seem to be a normal dating life here in the desert, there is no organized effort to do the outdoor activities and that our freeway billboards scream death and gloom. She said that recruiters have issues of getting people to move here because finding spouses a job is challenging.

Raul Ruiz said that many young professionals seem to feel isolated from the world. He said it will be important to market this area as a platform for bigger and better things. He stated that there seems to be a dichotomy of worlds – on one side we have education, health, and social needs where people are struggling for basic necessities. On the other side we have the arts, restaurants, and the part that elevates our spirits and gives refinement to our quality of life. The question is how we are going to meet the needs for both sides. There seem to be two efforts being pushed by sophisticated agencies and the grassroots. How can we create a Coachella Valley identity that is inclusive and meets everyone’s needs? We need to discuss the marketing because it seems like the programs are there. Don Perry mentioned that this is a tale of two cities. How do you wrap around the two socioeconomic groups. Bill Powers stated that all of the stuff we have geared toward the senior population and that we haven’t focused on the youth side. Jeff stated that right now the market that fills hotels and restaurants are the seniors, not the youth. Missy Gardner mentioned that there aren’t any really appealing shopping and entertaining areas. Ernie said that if you want to retain young people here then you need have attractive activities for the age group. Terry said that the only really organized marketing effort for the Coachella Valley is the Convention and Visitors Bureau and they are marketing to the senior age group by necessity. He said that this is where the media can jump in as a collective and help with marketing. Maria mentioned that they have struggled to get media coverage in their community when they have events. Don mentioned that he thinks that we desperately need internal marketing. We need to have a campaign addressing why we live here. Steve said that we should consider generating a valley wide website that includes all valley events. Rene said it would help to have good communication because events don’t seem to have good marketing. Kate said the key would be to have a website that could sort so that we could personalize it to you. Raul said that there is a digital divide because many students and families in the East Valley don’t have computers at home. Kate mentioned that they could add a function on the site that could export and print and then distribute.

Karolee Sowle said that it still comes down to jobs. When they hire professionals there is always the question of what jobs are available for spouses. She says that they can’t recruit and retain if our quality of place is not good. The focus needs be jobs because without jobs there will not be food or computers on the table. Bill Kroonen said that he would like to know why the young professionals in the group have returned home. Lisa Vossler said that she moved back to be closer to her family and because she was able to buy her first home in her thirties and there were good job opportunities when she
moved here in 2000. Nancy Samuelson said that she wanted a suburban lifestyle with a
great family community and good schools. As a mom, she wanted safe community
environment to raise her family. Cristina Gregorio said that she came back to be closer
to family, have a slower paced lifestyle and be a part of was community oriented place.
She said that when she moved back finding a job was the biggest challenge. Paula said
that she came back to be closer to family and that she’s stayed here because she has a
great job that is allowing her to grow. Missy said that her biggest reason for coming
back was family and having a sense of community. Rene said she came back because of
family and weather and a sense of community. Ernie mentioned said he came back
because of family and because he felt that he had a lot of support here. He also feels
like we have a blank canvas and an opportunity to create and build things from scratch.
This wouldn’t have been as easy in Los Angeles.

Meeting adjourned.

Agenda for January 7, 2010: